

SCRIPTURAL CAUTION,

IN A

NATIONAL VIEW,

UNDER

CIRCUMSTANCES OBVIOUSLY STRIKING,

AND VERY

AFFECTINGLY IMPRESSIVE.

BY THE

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(vi)

THE following production may seem to require an apology for being obtruded upon the public, at a time, when the press is so fully employed in dispersing the instructions of the pulpit. This consideration hath, indeed, had it's influence upon the mind of the author, and made him unwilling to gratify partial candour at an earlier moment. But having waited to see what effect the past solemnities, most earnestly enjoined by an authority always to be venerated, and then rendered most impressive by the awful peculiarity of the moment, might have upon public manners and individual

conduct; and not meeting the desired satisfaction, he now presumes to cast his mite into the Treasury of national affection. Should the result be, in the least degree, conducive to the correction of folly, vice, and error, or the advancement of truth, virtue, and religion, the goodness of his aim, however feeble, will be most satisfactorily rewarded. The return of peace and prosperity to this country are more connected with no man's wish or solicitude; but whatever reasonable expectation in this way can be formed, unless PROPRIETY and CONSISTENCY in different ranks and orders first make their return, and there is a unity of moral deportment, religious seriousness, and popular subordination, not only existing in, but predominant throughout the great mass of society; if men are lovers of themselves, or lovers of pleasures

pleasures * to a degree incompatible with the love of God, betraying them, in any station, high or low, into compliances, stratagems, and transactions, which Christian principles, and even moral fitness, will not warrant, what probability can there be of substantial enjoyment or permanent success? Depend upon it, politically speaking, (all history will support me in the assertion,) if we will not have God to reign over us, He will leave us to reap the fruit of our doings †, and whatever instruments of His government He may employ for our chastisement, neither His wisdom nor His justice can be disappointed in the execution of His laws.

* These are sources of mischief, the fruits of which we too well know, and have abundant reason most earnestly to deplore.

† See an excellent tract, entitled, "Reform or Ruin," which calls for universal attention.

Repentance and life are in every view,
and in every sense, inseparably united.
Wherefore the condition is (surely, it is
favourable, we know, it is fixed) “ turn
“ yourselves, and live ye.”

SERMON.

ROM. ch. xi. Part of the 20th and 21st verses.

BE NOT HIGH-MINDED, BUT FEAR.
FOR, IF GOD SPARED NOT THE NATURAL
BRANCHES, TAKE HEED LEST HE, ALSO,
SPARE NOT THEE.

THE Subject, of which these words are the result, and that sacred Monitor who pronounced them, must ever demand a fulness of attention from all Christian posterity. Whose interest is so inseparably connected with the exhortation as to make a refusal to comply, not only unreasonable, but, in the highest degree, hazardous ; because it is risking the loss of the Divine protection, and, perhaps, provoking, in consequence, the severest visitation of God's displeasure.

The rejection and punishment of the Jews, that memorable event referred to by St. Paul, does, indeed, exhibit such a striking lesson to us, that, upon due consideration, nothing, except insensibility, can resist it's appeal.

Their case was the abuse of blessings derived from the indulgence of supreme bounty, and the contempt of the greatest of all blessings, which could be conferred upon mankind, that of redemption by Jesus Christ. An instance of ingratitude so singular in itself, and so extravagantly insulting to the Almighty, that the vengeance before denounced was with deserved severity executed upon the offenders, infomuch that the most complicated miseries overtook them *. Their
City

* Our Lord gave the most awful warnings of that signal event ; and it's dreadful consequences are most affectingly described by JOSEPHUS, to whom a most distinguished writer of the present day gives a fulness of credit, not only for his testimony, but his eloquence.—Pursuits of Literature. B. 4. p. 309.

Thanks

City was pillaged and desolated, it's inhabitants became, not only a prey to implacable enemies, but the sad victims of their own fury, and their descendants, fugitives over the earth, as a standing evidence of the righteous judgment of God. Surely, such an infliction of punishment for such disobedience is a sufficient ground for caution to future generations of men, more particularly to those, who are taken into covenant with the Almighty under the most inestimable advantages, and, consequently, must be invariably obliged to revere His authority and obey His commands, amenable to His justice, and, when incensed, exposed to it's execution. For the Apostle asks, Is God unrighteous, who taketh vengeance? and then answers this question by another, which meets the understanding, and must impress the apprehension of mankind; How then can God judge the world?

Thanks are due to this extraordinary memorialist for his quotation. He merits applause for his application of a well adapted passage from LONGINUS.

It is, indeed, inconceivable, if He made it, which nothing but madness can controvert, that He should leave it without rule, or that this rule should not attach to creatures, who are capable of discerning and obeying it; who are acquainted with it's nature, it's motives, and it's sanctions; whose connection with it is indissoluble; whose lives and manners ought to be conformable to it, and whose deaths cannot defeat it's accomplishment; for there is no contradicting this assertion, Some mens' sins go beforehand to judgment, and some they follow after. In this view, which puts an effectual check upon human presumption, there seems to be an opening to a vast display of Omnipotence, the exertions of which cannot but be equally various and inconceivable. One distinction, however, we are not only warranted to make, but directed to pursue and apply, that of Nations and Bodies of men. All history, in a fulness of attestation, speaks to this very exemplified point; but that, upon which we must have an infallible

lible reliance, does so authenticate our belief,
 as to leave no room for hesitation. The truth
 is obvious and most alarming, and it calls
 aloud for improvement by a beneficial appli-
 cation to ourselves, whilst the things belong-
 ing to our peace, nationally considered, per-
 haps, our political existence, are urging us to
 vigilance and earnestness in the way of self-
 preservation; and, in order to make these
 successful, to an holy importunity in our
 united addresses to the Throne of God, whose
 own description of himself is, "Am I a God
 " at hand, saith the Lord, and not a God
 " far off? Do not I fill Heaven and Earth?
 " saith the Lord." Universality of dominion,
 is, indeed, so justly characteristic of the su-
 preme Being, that the human mind, when
 illuminated by the wisdom from above, can-
 not divest itself of such a persuasion, since,
 without it, insuperable perplexities must oc-
 cur, and every ray of light, otherwise attain-
 able, will be absorbed in surrounding darkness.
 The most melancholy experience hath evinced
 the

the truth of this remark, and still does in many parts of the world, upon which the Sun of Righteousness hath not yet arisen; a case, beyond the reach of our investigation, whose faculties will always be best employed, not in affecting to search into the secret things, which belong to the Lord our God, but by a due attention to those which are revealed to us, which are inseparably connected with the temporal and eternal interests of ourselves and our children.

Here then opens upon us an ample field for intellectual exercise at a time when we should avail ourselves of every wise direction and of every beneficial aid in repelling mischiefs and in securing comforts, in averting curses, and in preserving blessings, which we cannot, on the one hand, too much dread, nor, on the other, too highly value, both as friends to ourselves, and as guardians to our posterity.

Liberty,

Liberty, property, religion, and life, are all at stake, and threatened by remorseless vengeance with overthrow and perdition *. It is no breach of charity to affirm this ; for the most atrocious and tremendous facts, which ever stained the annals of history, stand in evidence, and the most determined malevolence proclaims it's boast, that banks of long continuance shall be thrown down, foundations subverted, the throne demolished, the altar polluted, and both sacrificed to avarice, ambition, and cruelty, to a savage fury, which having renounced all principle, feels no restraint. This is strong language, and it is very unpleasant to adopt it ; but truth and necessity warrant it's closest application. Under such circumstances, supineness, which is always a sad enemy to public good, must be inexcusable ; and there are no means of de-

* A late dreadfully notorious attempt upon the sacred life of the King himself stands in full evidence of this very interesting truth, when, had frantic violence effected it's purpose, the most complicated misery must have ensued.

fence which our duty does not call upon us earnestly to employ and enforce. But there is one which should be most attended to, as being of the greatest consequence in itself, and THAT without which others will be insignificant and vain, I mean the PROTECTION OF GOD.

Such is the solemn employment of this day, when we are called upon by authority, (which is, we should hope, in all it's branches exemplifying this conduct) to humiliate ourselves in the sacred courts of the Lord of Hosts. If we are resolved upon the execution of this most important purpose, and do not daringly trifle with our Almighty Friend, HIM who hath so OFTEN, and so LATELY, been with us in the day of our distress, our penitence (for without penitence we have no remedy) must be grounded, active, and sincere; it must originate from the heart, operate upon the life, and bring forth fruit corresponding to our professions; it must be a
 4 godly,

godly, not a pharisaic, sorrow, and have a uniform and commanding influence over our conduct, not only as citizens of an earthly Jerusalem, but as denizens of THAT which is above ; it must harmonize with our faith, and rely for it's efficacy upon the Merits of Christ ; it must comprehend a diligent conformity to His commands and example, and carry us on from strength to strength in the progress of that discipline which the Gospel enjoins as inseparable from the banner of Salvation. This is an engagement which summons to exertion every faculty of the soul, and will admit of no trifling or pretence, no artifice or collusion, no subterfuge or apology. Nothing will do but obedience conformable to Gospel precepts, and exemplified in a conduct corresponding to our engagements, as the covenanted people of God under his final dispensation of consummate mercy. Here, then, with such a sense of obligation in our view, and such an urgent call to it's actual, and immediate, and lasting enforce-

enforcement, three things demand our attention. The *first* is, an enquiry into the nature of our deportment and practice as Subjects, in respect to religious and moral character, of the Kingdom of God. The *second*, an earnest and fixed Resolution to amend our ways and our doings in whatever points of behaviour there is a consciousness of deviation from the known laws of that Kingdom. The *third*, that perseverance in the due regulation of our conduct is the most needful thing, without which, our petitions to Heaven will be a mockery, and consequently, so far from consoling us under our distresses, will aggravate our provocations, and expose us to the severest Visitations of His impending Justice.

No rational creature can be supposed to exist without some degree of attention to his own general conduct ; for, however slight his knowledge is of a law by which this should be regulated and determined, there must be a

con-

consciousness resulting from the heart, which will exercise it's authority as the Vicegerent of God. Self-inspection, therefore, is a natural act ; and, wherever this operates, some regard will be had to the nature and tendency of what we do in the course of our behaviour as moral and accountable Creatures. To us, who live under the light of Revelation, and are blessed with the most desirable means of instruction, such an obligation does, more especially, attach. We cannot but know the nature and bounds of our duty, and how abundantly we are interested in the great event of all, when God shall judge the world in righteousness, and, agreeably to the sanctions and evidences of his government, the people with his truth.

Here then should follow certain questions relative to our conduct as members of society, and personally concerned in it's preservation and support ; for we cannot be disobedient to God without being eventually, in some re-
B
respect,

spect, injurious to others as well as mischievous to ourselves. Have our practice and example been such as Christianity requires? Is there a uniformity and steadiness, a propriety and consistency in our deportment, corresponding to the several stations which we fill, and the respective duties and occupations, to which we are called, for we all have our particular, and general obligations? Or, must we, upon enquiry, be mortified with a sad consciousness of the reverse, by discovering that an unguardedness of conduct in ourselves has been a lure to others to imitate our follies and our vices, and different kinds of extravagances in a prudential, or moral view? It is a disagreeable remark to make, but it is too notorious a truth to be overlooked, that such is the case almost universally, for we must know, and see, and feel it. The body politic, like the body natural, when the manners of a people become degenerate, and an affectation of levity, and parade, and pleasurable excesses pervade the
great

great mass, when all want to be alike, and subordination, that indispensable cement of social life, is, in every sense, absorbed in licentiousness, will have it's sicknesses, and bruises, and putrifying sores, will have it's nerves relaxed, it's strength debilitated, and it's component parts approaching to dissolution.

Under such circumstances remedies are difficult of application, mollifying ointment, and even the balm of Gilead, may fail, the best and most appeasing means may not succeed, and far less will violence, and severity, and frantic innovations. Effectual relief can be expected from nothing but a continued change of moral regimen, and a removal of the causes, which contribute to form, and to aggravate our political disease. This must be done by discernment, and resolution, and concurrence, by a sacrifice of private follies and vices at the Altar of public spirit, by reforming not the constitution of the country, which

is, at present, quite good enough to be the object of consuming envy, and an incitement to ambitious intrigue, but, the reformation of customs and manners, which are fantastical and profligate, degrading and destructive*, and, in some respects, (abounding facts warrant the affirmation) beyond the example of preceding times. Reform, in this view of things, when human depravity, with a boldness not to be described, exhibits it's horrid features throughout various ranks of life, is, indeed, loudly called for, and most devoutly to be wished, not as transient and superficial, in compliance with the solemnity of a day, but as radical and lasting, as looking to, and

* Charity, it is said, *will* cover a multitude of sins, not our own commutatively, such an imagination is vain, and directly contrary to St. Paul's explanation of the term, which implies universal benevolence. But it would be a prostitution of charity to pass without censure *boldness*, when it appears, where modesty should; *frivolism*, when it assumes the place of manliness; *degrading foppery*, when it excludes professional decorum; and above all, to treat with indifference and connivance, corruption of principles, and depravity of manners openly avowed.

comprehending, the good and happiness of the rising as well as the present generation, indeed of all generations to come. Mere pretence, let appearances be ever so plausible, without real amendment, will not do. We must be careful that the measure of our iniquities is not filled up, and we ourselves overtaken, as others have been, by the long provoked visitations of an offended God; whose attribute of justice can no more be separated from his Nature or from his Dominion, than that of his mercy. If we will neither hear nor fear, nor profit by an appeal to past transactions, or to present experience, punishment, however reluctantly inflicted, will follow. For though in the general course of divine dispensations forbearance is apt to discover itself, and mercy is disposed to rejoice against judgment, yet will not INFALLIBLE WISDOM ever permit God, in the result of his Government, to be mocked. Where THIS presides divine authority cannot be sacrificed to human perverseness; but uniform effects will correspond to uniform causes. It is so

in the nature of things ; it is so by the will of God ; it is so in the measures of his providence ; and all History, as one great Register of successive events, illustrates and proves to a certainty of conviction, which no controversy can remove, that Righteousness exalteth a nation, hath a certain tendency by it's happy influence to do so ; and that Sin is the disgrace, and, in it's fatal consequences, the ruin of a people. Enough, surely, to excite an earnest, and a fixed resolution on our part to amend our ways and our doings in whatever points of behaviour there is an appearance of deviation from the known and irreversibile laws of God's kingdom. For we can have no reasonable ground of expectation, that we shall be so partially indulged as to find an exemption from that discipline, or those penalties, which are providentially connected with his Government over accountable Beings *.

What

* The events of the world, of the Christian world, are so awful and alarming, as to induce us to believe that

What then can so nearly concern us as a compliance with the Will of our Maker, and the regulating our conduct by those laws without an attention to which neither our happiness can be attained nor his favour secured? If we have relaxed in this, and feel by a sad experience the evils resulting from our misconduct, we cannot, when a remedy may be had, be too solicitous for it's application, nor, when we know the infinite importance of Dispatch on account of the hazard of Delay, be too ready or too earnest in manifesting our repentance by a production of fruit unto holiness.

External signs, such as fasting and prayer, are only relatively good, and must have their value estimated by the influence over the

that they do not happen without the providential interposition of the Supreme Being to check the superstitions and corruptions of man, and for the fulfilling the predictions probably allusive to those times, when the kingdoms of the world must, in defiance of all human policy, become the kingdoms of God and of his Christ.

heart, and by the subsequent acts of a religious life.

The Christian faith, if it is considered as a merely nominal distinction, will have no effect in our temporal protection, nor open a passage for that rejoicing of hope, which every Penitent is encouraged to feel upon his return to a forgiving God, who must be thus conciliated by a substantial proof of sincerity and resolution. Christian fortitude must be added to Christian faith; and the armour of righteousness, on the right hand and on the left, so put on as to support us in our warfare, secure a conquest, and obtain that incorruptible crown, which the Captain of our Salvation, whose Merits have procured it, will finally confer. Nor is such a return to God, as we by this day's humiliation most solemnly engage to perform, to be a transitory act, one, which will suddenly vanish upon the first temptation; but a steady, uniform, persevering obedience to the precepts, and commands, and example of our Redeemer, a
resolute

resolute submission to that Yoke, which is
 easy, an habitual bearing of that Burthen,
 which is light. In this service, and in this
 alone, there is PERFECT FREEDOM, no appre-
 hensions to perplex, no torments to punish,
 no evils to lament, but a satisfactory passage
 through this life, and a joyful possession upon
 our arrival in the next. To dissemble under
 circumstances of distress, when there is such
 provision made for our comfort and escape ;
 when we are not only preserved from the
 severest miseries, but admitted to the com-
 pletest bliss, is a complication of folly and
 madness, which no language can describe ;
 especially, when we know the dreadful con-
 sequences of an Apostacy from God and
 Goodness, which must lead, if not seasonably
 checked and corrected, to an infliction of
 judgment temporal and eternal, to lamenta-
 tion, and mourning, and woe. For the
 concluding consideration is, since Omnipot-
 ence cannot fail in it's means of supporting
 the government of God, nor unerring Justice
 desert

desert itself in the application of these means, there is every reason to expect, that if provocation is persisted in by abandoned licentiousness *, penalties, such as divine wisdom shall appoint, and therefore most suitably adapted to the criminality of the offenders, will follow, it being God's avowed declaration, Vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord.

The variety of ways, in which He can do this, is unbounded. The History of the World tells us so. But without appealing to that, whether sacred or profane, most of us have lived long enough to make another appeal, to our own observation, may not I say, to our own feelings? Events have arisen, and mul-

* There are instances enough at present to warrant the application of these terms, when provocations to amusement (couched sometimes in terms levelled at things sacred) are continually manifold; and when the Christian Sabbath itself is prostituted to various acts of criminal indulgence.

tiplied,

tiplied, which no human foresight could conjecture, certainly not announce upon any rule of probability ; and when we consider what the events are, and what their instrumentality, there is no resolving them, ultimately, into any other cause than the providential Interposition of the Almighty, as a scourge to the nations of the earth, to raise them from a torpid state, and to convince them of their unworthiness to enjoy, without disturbance, blessings spiritual as well as temporal, which have been so long and so daringly abused by gross Superstition on the one hand, and by presuming Infidelity on the other, to their reproach and His dishonour. This scourge, unparalleled in some views of it, is still in operation, and no affected incredulity can now pretend to doubt it's Aim against this happy island, whose abundant blessings are threatened with overthrow and ruin.

Under such circumstances what are we to do, or where to look for support and rescue,

to the multitude of an Host, as if they, however able, or however valiant, can command success? Or to God, who alone can give it; under whose dominion the elements are, and no less the artful stratagems and stubborn wills of men, who, should he arise to confound their devices and disappoint their aims, must fall.

Upon Him, then, as the rock of our confidence, we must earnestly rely, and, whilst we neglect no means of succour, which Fidelity to our Country, Loyalty to our King, or Concern for ourselves and our posterity can suggest, whilst we meet danger with firmness, and encounter difficulties with resolution, let us, above all, be solicitous to put on the armour of righteousness, and take for an helmet the hope of salvation, in addition to the shield of faith, thus committing ourselves into the hands of God, as into the hands of a faithful Creator and most compassionate Saviour.

viour. For as HIS MAJESTY IS, so is HIS
MERCY.

To which most adorable GOD, as existing
in the fulness of incomprehensible perfection,
FATHER, SON, and HOLY GHOST, be ascribed
Dominion and Honour, now and ever.

... as His Majesty is, so is His

Majesty.

To which most adoring God, as existing
in the fulness of incomprehensible perfection,
Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, be ascribed
Dominion and Honour, now and ever.



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